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Contact: Matt Lambert/John O'Brien  
(202) 225-2132

## **Istook Backs Bill to Protect OK Farmers**

*H.R. 4341 aimed at shielding agricultural industry from unnecessary environmental lawsuits*

Washington, DC – Congressman Ernest Istook (R-Warr Acres) announces he will support bipartisan legislation aimed at protecting more than 162,000 Oklahoma family farmers from environmental lawsuits involving the discharge of animal waste.

The bill responds to lawsuits filed against Oklahoma and Texas farmers by the city of Waco, Texas and by the state of Oklahoma which claim that discharges from spreading manure on their farms violated the federal CERCLA law. The CERCLA statute was enacted in the early 80's to stop companies from releasing toxic chemicals into the air and water.

Congressman Istook thinks that CERCLA doesn't apply here.

**"CERCLA was passed to prevent chemical companies from dumping toxic waste into local waterways like Love Canal and Times Beach," said Congressman Istook. "The last thing Congress was thinking about when passing this law was preventing farmers from using manure on their farms. People have been using manure to grow crops since the beginning of time. To claim that manure is "hazardous material" is absolutely ridiculous. The lawsuit filed by our state's Attorney General smells worse than the manure does."**

**"Oklahoma farmers play by the rules. They follow all the state laws which regulate agriculture," he added. "They shouldn't be hauled into court on these exaggerated charges."**

**"Production agriculture is not asking to be excused from environmental obligations such as those under the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act and state laws, but simply to make sure that animal manure is not deemed as hazardous waste under CERCLA," said Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Steve Kouplen. "We greatly appreciate the leadership that Congressman Istook has taken on this issue by cosponsoring H.R. 4341. We simply want Congress to clarify what we believe is clear—that animal waste is not a hazardous substance under federal law."**

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